

Jon Lusk finds a range of albums from highland hits to francophone urbanity

WORLD CHOICE

A vandring minstrel

Norwegian folk artist Benedicte Maurseth evokes the soundscapes of her native land



At one with nature: Benedicte Maurseth weaves a sonic tapestry



Benedicte Maurseth

Hårr

Benedicte Maurseth (Hardanger fiddle), Rolf-Erik Nystrøm (saxophone)
Hubro HUBROCD2645

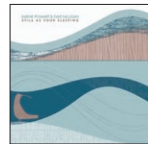
Norwegian Hardanger fiddler Benedicte Maurseth first featured in this magazine

with her 2010 debut *Alde*. Since then, she has collaborated with other neo-folk luminaries such as David Rothenberg, who invited her to join him in several musical projects involving the sounds of unique birds from around the world. Following this experience, her latest album *Hårr* is an exquisite *musique concrete* sound portrait of Maurseth's native Hardangervidda region, making canny use of samples of local wildlife and a small ensemble featuring double bass, vibes, marimba and electronica. It takes off with a typically forlorn sounding golden plover and sleepily twittering passerines before the appearance of irked or startled common cranes and arctic loons out on their own astral plane. Rolf-Erik Nystrøm's atmospheric flurries of sax could almost be wild sounds, but then there are the clanking bells of reindeer and their breathy, ungulate exertions, as well as matter-of-fact exchanges in Norwegian by their herders. You might feel you've been *vandring* in the Hardangervidda National park once the piece ends. ★★★★★

ANDERS BERGENSEN

July round-up

Scottish singer/composer **Karine Polwart** also makes a stellar return to this column, having last appeared in July 2019 with her heartfelt masterpiece *Laws Of Motion*.



However, her new release *Still As Your Sleeping* is a beautifully accomplished genuine duo

album with pianist Dave Milligan, who lives in the same Midlothian village of Pathhead as she does. The songs are an intimately sequenced mix of familiar traditional material such as 'Ae Fond Kiss' and interpretations of Kate McGarrigle and fellow Scot Alasdair Roberts, alongside original songs such as highlight 'Siccar Point', which epitomises Polwart's gift for storytelling and her deep feel for the Scottish landscape – here a seascape. (Hudson HUD025CD) ★★★★★

A sharp contrast in both feel and content is the nightclub atmosphere of *L'Anniversaire*, by French accordionist **Daniel Colin**, known as 'The Golden Fingers of the



Accordion'. This new recording celebrates his 80th birthday, and his status as the most revered exponent of modern musette. He's big in Japan, and also big on waltzes. There are plenty of suavely urbane vocals in French as well as a musical saw, which creates novel, eerie effects in places, and arrangements also include xylophone, castanets plus a Brazilian *pandeiro*, while Colin himself ventures further south by playing an Argentine bandoneon on a tango. (Buda 860371) ★★★★★

Another French language disc with boisterous group vocals that continues the anniversary theme is



20 Printemps, by Quebec five-piece **Le Vent Du Nord**, who still sound like a breath of fresh air after two decades of touring their rollicking dance music around the world. Their infectious sound is driven

by fiddle, hurdy gurdy, diatonic accordion, piano, guitar, bouzouki and podorythmie – foot tapping. It's simply irresistible, and as Canadian as maple syrup, which they've even penned a song in praise of. That sits sweetly among the traditional songs and tunes they've sourced from archives and song collecting friends. (*Compagnie du Nord CIE012*) ★★★★★

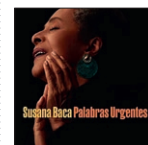
In far sunnier climes, but still within the Americas, *Encore* is the second archival release of Bahamian singer/guitarist **Joseph Spence**, recorded live in New York City and



in his Nassau cottage, during 1965. His sister Edith Pinder and family members also feature. Once

heard, Spence's eccentric growling, near-scat delivery of African American gospel standards such as 'Give me that Old Time Religion' and 'Down By The Riverside', which combined the rhyming tradition of Bahamian sponge fishermen of the early 20th century with an influential and innovative guitar style, will never be forgotten. He even seems to have been a vintage foot-tapper. (*Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40242*) ★★★★★

We should consider ourselves lucky that the reigning queen of Afro-Peruvian music **Susana Baca** is still making recordings, having gone off the radar since making



several delightful albums for David Byrne's Luaka Bop label, among others, in the early noughties. As

Peru's former Minister of Culture, she still has plenty to say about matters she considers urgent, so the lyrics of *Palabras Urgentes* concern matters such as global warming and the need to protect our environment, the example of former freedom fighters, the importance of celebrating Afro-Peruvian culture and resisting racism and corruption. And she sings with a voice that carries great moral authority and gentle wisdom. (*Real World Records CDRW237*) ★★★★★